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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -  
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TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: SECRETARY POWELL'S RESIGNATION  
AND U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

A) "Since [Chen] Has Extended an Olive Branch [to Beijing], Why Does He Still Want to Add Fuel to the Fire [across the Taiwan Strait]?"

The centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" editorialized (11/17):

"U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell has tendered his resignation, and according to a White House official, President George W. Bush has already invited National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice to head the State Department. The personnel shake-up in Washington's diplomatic circles in the wake of the U.S. general election is quickly taking shape. Taiwan, of course, must monitor and pay special attention to the United States' new diplomatic team and its implications for Washington's Asia-Pacific policy. But more importantly, Taiwan needs to try hard to rebuild its image, in the eyes of the U.S. decision makers, as a responsible and rational player whose interests are consistent with those of the United States. .

"Among everything, the most important thing is to rebuild the United States' trust in Taiwan because during the past period, unexpected rifts have occurred in the mutual trust between Taiwan and the United States due to Taiwan's referendum and its plans to institute a new constitution and to rectify the nation's name. [Secretary] Powell's recent comment in Beijing that Taiwan is not a sovereign state indicated that President Bush's decision-making circle is determined to strengthen its suppression of Taiwan's press for independence in an attempt to avoid a war across the Taiwan Strait. Different from Powell's moderate style, Rice is a tough hard-liner. After learning the lesson from her predecessor, the Rice team may act more cautiously and seek to squeeze the room allowed for Taiwan. When such an attitude is transformed and applied to a cross-Strait confrontation, it might pose a more unfavorable challenge for Taiwan. .

"The responsibility of a state leader is to protect the nation's dignity, security and prosperity. For Taiwan, the cross-Strait relationship is what is most closely related to its national dignity, security and prosperity, and what the United States expects from Taiwan is exactly its responsible and prudent attitude in handling cross-Strait issues. When the United States believes that Taiwan's moves hit the red line and threaten U.S. national interests, it would certainly attempt to destroy the threat. In any situation such as participation in the international community, cross-Strait security and confrontation across the Taiwan Strait, Taiwan needs support from the United States. Hence, it is already more than important for Taiwan to enlarge its mutual interests with the United States. How can this island allow itself to become a threat in the eyes of the Untied States? .

"To be frank, if [Chen] has to add fuel to the fire [across the Taiwan Strait] every time after he extends an olive branch, any beautiful olive branch will become the firewood that keeps cross-Strait confrontation burning. Bystanders like the United States and international society would not feel the sincerity of Taiwan's [desire] for reconciliation. It is a good idea to seek accession into the United Nations under the name of Taiwan, but let us open our eyes and look at reality. Taiwan has failed each year in its efforts to join the United Nations and still we have not seen any progress on this matter. The key actually lies in the current international political situation and the relatively disadvantageous position Taiwan is in when compared with China. It actually has nothing much to do with Taiwan's name.

"Some scholars and politicians in the United States are worried that Chen Shui-bian will push for incremental

independence for Taiwan in a 'salami slicing' way. But now it seems that Taiwan is actually trying to 'scoop a salami.' It is not using a knife on the surface; however, it is using a spoon to scoop out the salami once in a while. [Chen] claims one day that the Republic of China is Taiwan, and that Taiwan is the Republic of China. Then another day [he] says Taiwan wants to push for its constitutional reform by carrying out the true spirit of instituting a new constitution. Later, [he] says that Taiwan wants to join the United Nations using the name Taiwan, and then he claims that the 1992 consensus is a consensus to surrender. Given all such remarks, even though the salami has not been cut through, it has actually been scooped empty inside with only the skin left on the outside. .

"Perhaps many of the remarks that President Chen has made over the past few years were for campaign purposes, but many previous examples have shown that the Chen Shui-bian administration seems to believe that a strained cross-Straight relationship could greatly benefit the Pan-Green camp. This may work well as a campaign strategy, but in the eyes of the United States and the international community, it merely proves that the Taiwan authorities are unable to transcend political party disputes and work out a policy that is in the national interest of the island. As a result, both Washington and the international community may find it hard to truly trust Taiwan, [and the distrust] will further alienate Taiwan from the United States and allow Beijing to have a greater influence and capability to effectively suppress Taiwan. When it comes to the responsibilities of a state leader to safeguard a nation's dignity, security and prosperity, shouldn't President Chen have higher expectations for himself other than winning an election?"

B) "The Key of the United States' Cross-Straight Policy Lies in Taiwan's Behavior"

Journalist Sean Liu observed in the centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" (11/17):

". [National Security Advisor Condoleezza] Rice is no stranger to the cross-Straight issue, and she is expected to handle the Taiwan policy on the United States' existing basis, which includes Washington's long-standing displeasure with the Chen Shui-bian administration, its firm opposition to Taiwan independence and the push for Taiwan to buy weapons. President George W. Bush, during his second term, will certainly urge China to demonstrate flexibility and to resume talks with Taiwan. But if the Taiwan leaders continue with their actions or words that often challenge the United States' 'one China policy,' it is evident that Beijing will not be the target of U.S. pressure."

C) "Condoleezza Rice May Adjust U.S. Policy toward Taiwan"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" noted in an editorial (11/17):

"For Taipei, newly re-elected President George W. Bush's appointment yesterday of his National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice to replace Colin Powell as U.S. secretary of state may provide a new opportunity to improve Washington relations strained in the last two years over the way President Chen Shui-bian pushed his political agenda and addressed his differences with Beijing.

"Rice is unlikely to change Washington's basic 'one China' policy, a position which has been followed by all past administrations since the U.S. shifted diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing more than two decades ago. However, she could adopt a clearer stance against Taiwan's passionate campaign to pursue formal independence and its escalating anti-Beijing rhetoric.

"A State Department under Rice could move more actively to encourage the resumption of long-stalled contacts and talks between Taipei and Beijing. The above policy trends have already become apparent during the latter part of the current Beijing term. Such policy adjustments have been considered necessary to prevent the simmering tension between the two sides from escalating into hot war, a conflict that the U.S. could be drawn into. ."